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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by American Legion national chaplain Rev. Lawrence L. Vollink from Ypsilanti, MI.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

For all of our honorable Senators and staff, we pray, eternal God. We thank You for all of the blessings You have bestowed upon us, especially for this great Nation we are privileged to serve. We ask that You be with all of our leaders who are making the decisions that affect us, that You would endow them with courage and conviction, adding wisdom to their knowledge and flavoring it with humility.

May our motivations be out of our love for all people to help them to live peacefully. We ask for tasks that are suited to our strength, but we ask for Your strength for any task You have given us. Help us to live in the knowledge that You have matched us to this hour in history and that the place and time of our service to You and to our country is not random but by Your wisdom and direction.

Father, walk close to our Senators, that they may not fail. Remind all of us, Lord, that Your wisdom is not found in an hour, a day, or a year but in a process that lasts a lifetime, with You, Lord, by our side. We ask for patience, for understanding, as our Senators serve this beloved country.

We ask that You watch over our Armed Forces this day and always.

O Lord, You are our strength and shield. Bless us with Your abiding presence, now and forever. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 23, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the Department of Defense authorization bill. Last night, I filed cloture on this bill. The vote is expected to occur 1 hour after we come in tomorrow. Germane first-degree amendments must be filed at the desk prior to 1 p.m. today in order to be considered postcloture.

Rollcall votes in relation to amendments are expected to occur throughout the day and into the evening. This is the time for people who have indicated they want to offer amendments to do so. We had a lot of down time in which Members could have, but we are making progress on the bill. It is my understanding, from speaking to the managers, that for the most contentious issues, there is a pathway to completion. I hope that in fact is the case.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE WEEK VII, DAY II

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, last night, the President, to his credit, reiterated what the American people have been saying for weeks: that the Democratic health care proposals we have seen so far aren't where they need to be. I couldn't agree with him more. President Obama also said that rising health care costs are an imminent threat to our economy and that any reform must reduce these long-term costs.

The problems the President highlighted are real and, here again, Republicans agree with him. Unfortunately, the solutions to these problems are not in the Democrat plans now working their way through Congress. In fact, the bills we have seen would make these problems even worse. The director of the Congressional Budget Office has said that these proposals would increase overall health care spending, not reduce it. All of us want health care reform. But we want reform that brings down costs and long-term spending, not a so-called reform that makes things even worse.

The President also said health care reform must not increase the national

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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